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ABSTRACT

The National Career Development Guidelines is one of several initiatives that has supported the expansion of state-level career development capacity and comprehensive, competency-based career guidance programs in various local program settings. This initiative, sponsored by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC), has provided leverage funding to states to support the development and improvement of comprehensive career development programs. The Guidelines focus on three broad areas of program excellence including program participant competencies, organizational capabilities, and personnel requirements. Participant competencies and indicators are organized around three areas including self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning. Elementary, middle, high school, and adult levels are addressed. (ABL)

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## The National Career Development Guidelines

*Juliet V. Miller*

### Overview

The National Career Development Guidelines is one of several initiatives that has supported the expansion of state-level career development capacity and comprehensive, competency-based career guidance programs in various local program settings. This initiative, sponsored by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC), has provided leverage funding to states to support the development and improvement of comprehensive career development programs. It has combined with other program improvement incentives such as Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act funds, state efforts to develop goals and models for career guidance, and local-level interest in making guidance more accountable and programmatic. Over 40 states have used the National Career Development Guidelines as part of a comprehensive state-wide strategy. This Digest will summarize major activities of this initiative and suggest resources for those who wish to use the Guidelines.

### What are the National Guidelines?

NOICC undertook its National Career Development Guidelines initiative to support and encourage activities designed to strengthen and improve comprehensive, competency-based career guidance programs. Several program settings are addressed including schools, colleges, human services agencies, community organizations and businesses.

The National Career Development Guidelines initiative was launched in 1987 and the Guidelines were developed in collaboration with the professional career counseling community, local program administrators, counselor educators and state guidance supervisors. Coordination with similar efforts by professional organizations, career development researchers, and state departments of education was stressed. Several advisory and technical assistance groups were formed to ensure broad input from researchers, professional leaders and practitioners.

The Guidelines focus on three broad areas of program excellence including (1) program participant competencies, (2) organizational capabilities, and (3) personnel requirements. The program participant competencies and indicators describe suggested program outcomes and are organized around three areas including:

- *Self-knowledge*—Self-concept, interpersonal skills, and growth and development;
- *Educational and Occupational Exploration*—Relationship between learning and work, career information skills, job seeking, maintenance and advancement skills, and impact of social and labor market change on career; and
- *Career Planning*—Knowledge of decision making, planning for diverse life roles, gender issues in career, and applying career planning skills.

These competency areas address program outcomes for elementary, middle school, high school, and adult levels. The organizational capabilities describe the structure and support needed for quality programs including administrative commitments, facilities, materials, and equipment. The personnel requirements list the staff requirements and competencies needed by counselors and other career development personnel to deliver comprehensive programs.

Five Local Handbooks (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 1989) present the National Guidelines and a suggested program improvement process for elementary school, middle/junior high school, high school, postsecondary and community and business organizations. A Trainer's Guide (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 1989) can be used to train local staff to use the Guidelines.

### State-Level Applications

NOICC made grants to 28 states to encourage use of the Guidelines. These grants funded state advisory committees, the development and dissemination of state-level guidelines, and local pilot sites. In addition to NOICC grants, states have used other funding sources such as Federal vocational education and JTPA funds, state educational reform funds, local program funds and business-education partnership support. Many states have developed comprehensive state models and are engaged in a variety of activities to support the improvement of local programs.

California used the National Career Development Guidelines to implement its mandated matriculation guidelines to improve the transition from community colleges to four-year colleges. This activity resulted in improved career counseling and individualized matriculation plans for each student (Chancellor's Office, 1990).

Florida's Commissioner of Education endorsed the Blueprint for Career Preparation that includes recommended career development goals based on the National Guidelines (Florida Department of Education, 1988). A Resource Guide (Florida Department of Education, 1990) describes books, software, kits and materials keyed to students competencies recommended in the Blueprint.

Idaho's comprehensive state model combines the National Guidelines with other models and has been implemented using a ten-year plan (Idaho Department of Education, 1988). Currently, Idaho is developing an adult level model.

Michigan worked to coordinate the Guidelines with the employability skills effort and to focus on developing an activity guide for the middle school level (Michigan Department of Education, 1990).

Nebraska developed a program handbook that suggested activities for the Guidelines competencies and indicators (Nebraska Department of Education, 1989). The product has been expanded and

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revised by the Vocational Studies Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

New Jersey used a local pilot site (Neptune Township Public Schools, 1990) to develop a career guidance curriculum in keeping with its emphasis on local control of education. This curriculum has provided a model for other districts in the state.

Oregon emphasized integrating career information into high school career development program. The publication, *Schoolwork, Lifework* (Oregon Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 1989), provides specific guidance activities to ensure that use of career information is linked to the Guidelines competencies.

### Benefits of Comprehensive Programs

A major purpose of the National Career Development Guidelines is to encourage the evaluation of career guidance programs based on student outcomes. Use of the Guidelines results in a program plan which specifies how student competencies will be measured. The Ohio Department of Education (1989) has provided an example of how various districts are evaluating specific student outcomes. There are also benefits for staff. In a report on the four original pilot states, Miller (1991) reported on the following benefits of comprehensive programs.

**Administrators.** The three highest ratings were for "better understanding the benefits of career guidance programs, better understanding the student outcomes that resulted from our program, and better understanding how career guidance is related to and supports current educational priorities." Other areas that showed high benefit were "better able to communicate about program to other groups and more willing to fund career guidance programs."

**Counselors.** The two highest ratings were for "more clearly defined role and functions, and clearer understanding of the program goals." Other areas that showed high benefit were "contact with greater number of students, contact with students are more apt to focus on developmental rather than crisis needs, more involved in teaming with other staff, updated skills in career area, and more likely to act as a resource person to teachers and others."

**Teachers and faculty members.** The highest rated benefit was "better able to relate career concepts to other programs, such as at-risk or drug-free schools programs." Other benefits that received high ratings included "more clear about relevance of their curriculum areas for occupational areas, increased communication with counselors, and better able to incorporate career concepts in their curriculum and instruction."

### How Can You Use the National Guidelines?

Here are some steps you can take to access and use materials that were developed through the National Career Development Guidelines initiative.

**Access materials in ERIC.** The following list of references provides a starting point to learn more about the National Career Development Guidelines and state-level products that are keyed to the Guidelines.

**Contact your SOICC director.** Ask the Director of your State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee for information about these initiatives and about other SOICC activities. Also, contact your State Guidance Supervisor for information about state-level guidelines and activities related to career guidance.

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